NATURAL SITES

Sl. No.	Name of site	State
1.	Kaziranga National Park (1985)	Assam
2.	Manas Wild Life Sanctuary (1985)	Assam
3.	Keoladeo National Park (1985)	Rajasthan
4.	Sunderban National Park (1987)	West Bengal
5.	Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988, 2005)	Uttaranchal

Declaration of Ram Setu as national monument

†319. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Madras High Court has directed to declare Ram Setu (between India and Sri Lanka) as national monument under the National Monument and Archaeological Place Law, 1958;

(b) whether its existence is the oldest in comparison to the many declared monuments;

(c) whether such sentiments alongwith logic have also been expressed by many archaeologists, legal experts, Members of Parliament, social and religious organizations; and

(d) what is the difficulty in declaring it national monument by keeping the above things in mind, if there is no difficulty or objection in it then what steps have been taken to make declaration by the Ministry?

THE MINISTER CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) No such directions have been received from the Madras High Court.

(b) No archaeological study has been made in respect of Ram Setu by the Archaeological Survey of India.

(c) Such sentiments have been expressed by way of representations to the Government and petitions before Courts.

(d) As per the scientific evidence available so far, Ram Setu does not fulfil the criteria to be declared as a monument of national importance under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

Protection of cultural heritage sites in Uttarakhand

†320. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether work is under process to declare some villages of the State of Uttarakhand alongwith Dwarahat and Adibadri as 'cultural village' and whether the work is going on the special plan for the protection of the cultural heritages situated in these villages; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) No, Sir. There is no provision in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 to declare a village as 'cultural village'. However, there are 42 monuments/sites declared as of national importance under the jurisdiction of Archaeological Survey of India in the State of Uttarakhand, of which eight monuments are in Dwarahat and one monument is in Adibadri. The following expenditure has been incurred by way of structural repairs/maintenance on these monuments/sites during the last three years:

2004-05	Rs.43,87,774/-
2005-06	Rs.38,20,346/-
2006-07	Rs.31,71,750/-

Tardy flow of credit in Minority dominated districts

321. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been tardy progress in stepping up flow of credit in the minority dominated districts;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) Several steps have been taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the recent past to step up credit flow to minorities. In its Circular dated 1.09.2006, RBI had instructed to all the Scheduled Commercial Banks to ensure that the minority communities receive a fair and equitable portion of credit within the overall targets of Priority Sector and sub-targets of 10% earmarked for Weaker Section. The Master Circular on Priority Sector lending was amended on 18.05.2007 to include minority communities under "Weaker Section".

In their consolidated Master Circular dated 5.07.2007 on lending to minorities, the RBI has advised the banks to take care to ensure that minority communities secure in a fair and adequate measure, the benefits flowing from various Government sponsored special programmes and create a separate cell in each bank to ensure smooth flow of credit to minority communities.

In its circular dated 16.07.2007, RBI has issued a consolidated list of 121 minority concentration districts to Scheduled Commercial Banks for specially monitoring credit flow to minorities.

Easing of norms for FDI in agro-processing

322. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to further ease norms for FDI in agro-processing and agro-infrastructure;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and